



Standards for Community Interpreting Services

MCIS adheres to the National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services, which does not endorse cultural brokering and advocacy, but is intended to be a broad guide for interpreting in several settings.

Foreword

In Ontario, the role of the oral language interpreter has evolved and become more refined over time. Historically interpreters were identified as “cultural interpreters” with a role to bridge “cultural misunderstandings” between service providers and non/limited English speakers. Determining how and when an interpreter should intervene created conflicts for all parties for a variety of reasons. Although cultural differences can exist between individuals who do not share a common language, cultural differences can also exist between individuals who do share a common language. Given the complexity of factors that impact and influence an individual’s culture, acting as a “cultural broker/bridge” goes beyond the scope of an interpreter’s duty. Expecting an interpreter to perform that function, in and of itself, contravenes the ethical principle and standard of practice to remain impartial, and furthermore begs the question of the demonstrated competence of the interpreter to perform that function. Therefore, it should be noted that the role of the interpreter focus on the delivery of messages between individuals who do not share a common language rather than “cultural differences/nuance” of the speakers.

Introduction

Standards of practice define the framework from which an oral language interpreter’s performance is conducted and measured. Standards of practice guide how a language interpreter will perform his/her role, duties and responsibilities. Ethical principles focus on the “shoulds” of an interpreter’s performance when ethical and other considerations impact an interpreter’s ability to adhere to the standards of practice.

Standards of practice and ethical principles are complementary guideposts to equip an interpreter with clear parameters for delivery of quality interpretation service.

The development of and adherence to standards of practice and ethical principles reinforces and supports consistent practice for all interpreters. Standards of practice serve in all areas where criteria for professional performance are needed in making decisions and may be used in making determinations regarding professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. Standards of Practice enable service providers, employers and non/limited English speakers requiring the services of an interpreter to recognize what standards of performance can be expected by a competent interpreter. They also assist educators in developing curriculum and in providing appropriate instruction. In the event that the Standards of Practice set a standard that is higher than an employer’s or service provider’s policy or procedure, the interpreter should comply with the standard set by the Standards of Practice.

There are forty-seven standards of practice interconnected with eight ethical principles:

1. Accuracy and Fidelity
2. Confidentiality
3. Impartiality
4. Respect for Persons
5. Maintaining Role Boundaries
6. Accountability
7. Professionalism
8. Continued Competence

Standard of Practice: Accuracy and Fidelity

Ethical Principle: Interpreters strive to render all messages in their entirety accurately, as faithfully as possible and to the best of their ability without addition, distortion, omission or embellishment of the meaning.

Objective: Preservation of the meaning of the message.

1. The interpreter renders all utterances and written communication faithfully using the same grammatical person as the speaker or writer. The rendition should sound natural in the target language and there should be no distortion of the original message through additions, omissions, or explanation. The idiom, register, style and tone of the speaker is preserved.
2. The interpreter advises all parties that everything said in the encounter will be interpreted. If any party requests that the interpreter refrain from interpreting all utterances, the interpreter is obliged to inform all other parties of the request and seek direction.
3. The interpreter retains English words mixed into the other language, as well as culturally bound terms which have no direct equivalent in English, or which may have more than one meaning. Whenever possible, the interpreter will attempt a translation of that word to provide the listener with an idea of what the word means.
4. The interpreter asks for repetition, rephrasing, or explanation, if anything is unclear. Upon recognizing that the interpreter has misunderstood the communication, he/she identifies the misunderstanding and requests direction from the parties involved.
5. The interpreter ensures that the meaning of gestures, body language, and tone of voice is not lost, by replicating what has been seen or heard by the interpreter.
6. The interpreter uses a mode of interpreting appropriate for the setting. In most interview situations, spoken-language interpreting is done in consecutive mode.
7. The interpreter performs summary interpretation (i.e. some of the elements of the communication are not interpreted) only with the knowledge and consent of all parties.

Standard of Practice: Confidentiality

Ethical Principle: Interpreters will not disclose and will treat as confidential all information learned, either uttered or written in the performance of their professional duties, while adhering to relevant requirements regarding disclosure

Objective: Protection of the privacy of all parties and the confidentiality of information.

8. The interpreter advises all parties that she or he will respect the confidentiality of the encounter. All parties in an interpreted encounter have a right to expect that the interpreter will hold information about them in confidence.
9. The interpreter does not disclose information spoken, seen or written outside of the interpreting situation without the expressed permission of all parties or unless required by law. If disclosing the time and/or place of an encounter may identify the purpose, persons or content, the interpreter shall not disclose such information.
10. The interpreter may, where collaborative work with other professionals is required, be briefed, or participate in, relevant discussions with other interpreters, members of the team involved with the other party, authorized representatives of the interpreting agency and/or the service-providing institution. Anyone receiving information in order to provide interpretation service is ethically bound by the duty of confidentiality.

Standard of Practice: Impartiality

Ethical Principle: Interpreters strive to maintain impartiality by showing no preference or bias to any party involved in the interpreted encounter

Objective: Full communication not impeded by any bias or preference of the interpreter. Avoidance of the perception that the interpreter has a preference or bias towards any party involved in the interpreted encounter.

11. The interpreter remains impartial at all times and informs all parties of the duty to remain impartial.
12. The interpreter declines to interpret when she or he has a personal or any vested interest in the outcome of the encounter.
13. The interpreter declines to interpret when his or her personal or other relationship with any party may affect, or be perceived by any party to affect, impartiality.
14. The interpreter declines to interpret when any situation, factor, or belief exists that represents a real or potential conflict of interest for the interpreter.
15. The interpreter discloses to all parties in the encounter any personal or other relationship that may affect, or be perceived by any party to affect, the interpreter's impartiality.
16. The interpreter informs the interpreter service agency/organization when he or she has a personal or other vested interest in the outcome of the assignment or when any situation, factor, or belief exists that represents a real or potential conflict of interest which will impact an interpreter's ability to interpret everything faithfully and impartially.

Standard of Practice: Respect for Persons

Ethical Principle: Interpreters demonstrate respect towards all parties involved in the interpreted encounter.

Objective: Respect of parties to the interpreted encounter. Demonstration of an acknowledgement of the inherent dignity of all parties in the interpreted encounter.

17. The interpreter demonstrates respect for all parties.
18. The interpreter promotes direct communication among all parties in the interpreted encounter.
19. The interpreter engages in behaviour that promotes autonomy and personal choice of the individuals involved in the interpreted encounter.

Standard of Practice: Maintenance of Role Boundaries

Ethical Principle: Interpreters strive to perform their professional duties within their prescribed role and refrain from personal involvement.

Objective: Protection of professional integrity. Reduction of exposure to liability. Maintenance of emotional well-being and physical safety of interpreter.

20. The interpreter's role is to enable communication between parties, who speak on their own behalf and make their own decisions.
21. The interpreter does not advocate on behalf of any party.
22. The interpreter does not enter into the discussion, give advice or express personal opinions about the matter of the encounter, or show reactions to any of the parties.
23. The interpreter does not filter communication, mediate, or speak on behalf of any party.
24. The interpreter avoids unnecessary contact with the parties. Prior to the encounter, the interpreter may initiate contact to ensure understanding of the language, to confirm details of an appointment, and to convey any information about the encounter needed by the non-English speaker.
25. The interpreter does not perform services other than interpretation services for any party.
26. The interpreter utilizes the least obtrusive mode of interpretation.
27. The interpreter protects her or his own privacy, well-being and safety.

Standard of Practice: Accountability

Ethical Principle: Interpreters are responsible for the quality of interpretation provided and accountable to all parties and the organizations engaging the interpreter's service.

Objective: Responsibility for the quality of the interpreter's work. Accountability for maintaining role boundaries and standards. Adherence to laws and standards.

28. The interpreter identifies and corrects interpretation errors as soon as possible.
29. The interpreter declines assignments that require knowledge or skills beyond his or her competence.
30. The interpreter informs the parties immediately and requests direction in the course of an encounter, if it becomes apparent to the interpreter that expertise beyond her or his competence is required.
31. The interpreter maintains his or her role, limits and obligations and takes steps to ascertain that all parties understand them.
32. The interpreter conducts her or himself in compliance with legislative requirements and generally accepted standards of the profession.
33. The interpreter maintains transparency. When clarification is necessary, the interpreter says to all parties, "I, the interpreter, need clarification on...."
34. The interpreter brings to the attention of an appropriate person any circumstance or condition that impedes full compliance with any standard in this document, including but not limited to conflict of interest, interpreter fatigue, inability to hear or inadequate knowledge of specialized terminology, and declines to continue any assignment under conditions that make such compliance patently impossible

Standard of Practice: Professionalism

Ethical Principle: Interpreters at all times act in a professional and ethical manner.

Objective: Maintenance of professional conduct and comportment.

35. The interpreter behaves in a manner consistent with the highest professional standards and the protocols and procedures of the interpreter service agency.
36. The interpreter performs her or his duties as unobtrusively as possible.
37. The interpreter completes the assignments she or he has accepted.
38. The interpreter arrives on time at the appointed location of the encounter.
39. The interpreter remains at the appointed location until the encounter ends or until dismissed.
40. The interpreter dresses in appropriate business attire for face-to-face encounters.
41. The interpreter does not conduct personal or other business while on an interpreting assignment.
42. The interpreter creates a working environment conducive to performing interpretation over the telephone.

Standard of Practice: Continued Competence

Ethical Principle: Interpreters commit themselves to lifelong learning in recognition that languages, individuals, and services evolve and change over time and a competent interpreter strives to maintain the delivery of quality interpretation

Objective: Achievement of the highest level of competence. Demonstration of certifications, accreditations, training and experience. Maintenance and improvement of skills.

43. The interpreter takes available courses and examinations to obtain accreditation and/or certification.
44. The interpreter maintains and expands skills and knowledge through self-teaching, formal and informal continuing education.
45. The interpreter seeks evaluative feedback and practices self-evaluation concerning performance.
46. The interpreter is prepared to demonstrate her or his certifications, accreditations, training and pertinent experience.
47. The interpreter maintains membership in appropriate professional associations of interpreters and complies with the code of ethics of such associations.



PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES TO REQUEST MCIS INTERPRETING SERVICES

Making a Request

- You will be asked for a **reference or case number** and the **full name of the client**.
- Should you require live assistance from an intake coordinator and you are not able to reach us under our main number, please call **our emergency number**.
- Please provide your **cell phone numbers** to facilitate urgent communication. We will provide cell phone numbers for interpreters. This will expedite resolution of problems.
- For **conference calls**, make sure you specify the contact number(s) you would like the interpreter to use for the call.
- **Bookings by you directly** with the interpreter create confusion and can lead to more missed appointments. Should you wish to book a specific interpreter, please mention it in your request to us. You can ask for the interpreters' availability when you speak to them, but you should not consider this a firm booking. You or the interpreter needs to call or send the request in. Affirmation by us with a reference number serves as the confirmation. This ensures that you get an interpreter when and where you want it, and that interpreters get paid.
- When you expect a face-to-face assignment to last **longer than the minimum time period**, please let us know so we can block off enough of the interpreter's time.
- Try to book an interpreter as soon as you establish the need for language services.

Confirmation

- Expect a **confirmation or status update with a reference number** within two business days after placing a request that is more than five business day away. If you do not hear from MCIS within that timeframe, or the timeframe you specified when you placed the request, please contact us immediately.
- Let us know when you have an emergency timeframe or other special circumstances

Problems

- Should an **interpreter not reach you** at the expected time, please contact MCIS immediately, so we can engage in problem solving.
- Fill out a **feedback form** and return to MCIS by fax or email. These forms can be sent upon your request and are available on-line.

After Hours

- Language services are available **24/7**. Contact us under our emergency number.

Safety

- Always have the interpreter stay with you during an assignment.
- Interpreters will use their first names only and will decline from providing any personal identifying information in front of the client. If they are required to sign a document stating that they provided the interpretation, they will do this after the client has signed.
- **Interpreters are not permitted to arrive at the location and contact the client without you present.** They are instructed to wait in the lobby or outside of the home. During **extreme weather** health concerns may arise. Please arrive on time whenever possible. If you are delayed, contact the Interpreter by cell directly or MCIS Intake to make arrangements to meet at an alternate location prior to the meeting.



- Always inform MCIS and the interpreter of any known risks and provide any advice, protection and safety measures generally available to participants in the interpreted event. The interpreter shall never be forced to enter a situation that poses a risk to his/her health and well being.
- Always ensure that you are in full compliance with the OSHA, including the recent amendments-Bill 168, and that all the employees with dealings with our interpreters are properly educated about violence and harassment in the workplace.

Translation

- Interpreters cannot provide accurate translation of written documents on the spot. Such evidence would not hold up in court. Sight-translation or the reading of the document can give you a good idea what a written document/audio tape is about.
- In order to ensure accuracy, **translation must be provided by a qualified Translator.**

Message Relay

- **Confirmations of meeting times or other brief messages** that do not require ongoing dialogue may be communicated through a message relay by the Interpreter without the participation of the Service Provider. In the event that the client has questions or comments, MCIS will advise the Service Provider to set up a telephone conference call.

Debriefing Interpreters

- Interpreters must maintain their objectivity no matter how emotionally charged the situation becomes. Sometimes this can be very challenging. If a Service Provider is concerned about the interpreter, they are inviting to contact MCIS. **MCIS is able to provide debriefing support to the Interpreter 24/7.**

Interpreter Protocol

- Allow the Interpreter to provide an **Introduction in both the other language and English** at the beginning of each and every visit. It outlines the rules of engagement, includes the code of ethics, reinforces confidentiality and obtains approval from the client to use the specific interpreter. It takes only a minute and is a verbal agreement that is considered acceptable by the courts in the event the matter goes to trial.

American Sign Language

- MCIS provides ASL.

Language Mosaic

- Reports on stats usage can be made available to your agency to assist in future planning of human resources, programming and finances. Call us if you wish to learn more about diversity in your community.

Quality Assurance

- MCIS continually evaluates the quality of service provided and respond proactively to issues which emerge. MCIS provides **orientations to Service Providers** to share protocol and discuss harmonizing languages. This session is provided free of charge and support Service Providers in bridging language barriers.
- **Feedback forms** are available and MCIS welcomes all comments.
- Issues requiring immediate response can be handled by MCIS Intake through the emergency line.
- **MCIS has a dedicated manager responsible for all quality assurance matters. Peer Flach, our Director of Service Operations can be reached at 416-426-7051, ext. 7982 and will be happy to discuss any issues that might arise**

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN INTERPRETER

The Role and Responsibilities Statement provides the parameters and scope of the function and duties for an interpreter associated with the VWAP -supported initiatives across the province. There may also be additional duties and responsibilities specific to the agency, which provides the Interpreter services.

NOTE: This statement of Role and Responsibilities is intended to govern the practice of the Interpreters throughout an interpreting assignment. For on-site assignments it applies throughout the time spent at the location of the assignment. This includes any time spent alone with either the Non-English Speaking Person (NESP) or the service provider. While the interpreter is not required to adhere to the statement of Role and Responsibilities in his or her personal life, it is expected that he/she will not, at any time, discuss any facts or issues related to an interpretation assignment.

Role Statement

To deliver, as faithfully as possible, messages transmitted between individuals who do not share a common language.

Responsibilities

A. In relation to all parties:

- Explains the role of the interpreter.
- Interprets accurately the meaning and intent of words spoken.
- Interrupts for clarification.
- Respects the integrity and right to confidentiality of all parties.
- Does not impose own values and opinions.
- Maintains professional conduct at all times.
- Does not discuss details of the assignment with the victim/perpetrator or service provider.
- Does not disclose personal information and/or opinions related to an assignment.

B. In relation to self:

- Declines to interpret when there is a conflict, or the perception of a potential conflict of interest, or a factor or belief that may affect objectivity.
- Participates in ongoing interpreter knowledge and skills development.
- Reveals and corrects any errors made in the interpretation.

C. In relation to the organization:

- Adheres to policies and procedures of the organization.

INTERPRETER INTRODUCTION

In most cases, an introduction is to be done at the beginning of each assignment in English and the Target Language

1. First Name and Language
2. Name of agency -MCIS
3. Will deliver message as faithfully as possible
4. Will interpret everything that is said
5. Will interpret in the first person
6. Will keep everything that you hear confidential
7. Will remain impartial
8. May take notes to aid your memory
9. May need to interrupt for clarification
10. May I begin the Interpretation (ask permission to be the interpreter)

Sample of an Introduction at a Face to Face Assignment:

1. *My name is Darlene and I am the Dutch Interpreter*
2. *I am from MCIS*
3. *Everything said will be interpreted*
4. *I will deliver the message as faithfully as possible*
5. *I will keep everything said today confidential*
6. *I may take notes to aid my memory and will destroy these notes in front of you at the end of the assignment*
7. *I ask that you speak directly to each other*
8. *I will remain impartial*
9. *I will interrupt for clarification*
10. *May I be your interpreter today?*

Sample of an Introduction given by telephone includes the ten points plus the following additions:

Are you both in the same location?

If yes, will you be using a speakerphone? Will you be passing the phone back and forth or will you each be on an extension?

I will need you to speak in shorter sentences.

I will say OK when it's time for you to continue speaking

Introduction in a group setting:

Introduction is the same as a face-to-face introduction except you introduce to all English speaking persons once.

If more than one interpreter is present, select one interpreter to introduce the others

For example, I am Darlene and I am the Dutch interpreter and I will be interpreting for Paula. Lin is the Mandarin Interpreter who will be interpreting for Fei ... (then continue the introduction covering the 9 remaining points)

Sample of an introduction to a child:

Hello, I'm here to help you speak to this person (pointing to the SP). Whatever you say I'm not going to tell anybody else. Whatever you say I'll tell only this person (pointing to the SP). I'll write a few things down just to remember but later I'll tear my notes up. I want you to speak to this person (pointing to the SP) directly and I'll repeat what you say in his/her language. I don't take anybody's side. If I don't understand something, I may ask you to repeat. Are you ready to start now?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS

1. Ensure Accuracy and Confidentiality

- Use an interpreter if you are not fluent in the other language.
- Avoid using family members, children or neighbours as interpreters.
- Do not use non-qualified interpreters.

2. Prior to Starting an Interview

- Give the interpreter a brief orientation, before entering the room.
- Encourage clarification and expect interruptions.

3. Etiquette

- Speak to the LESP¹ directly and not the interpreter
- Maintain primary eye contact with the LESP
- The interpreter will benefit from being able to see both you and the LESP to aid in communications. They may need to mimic gestures.

4. The Dialogue

- Keep a comfortable pace that will allow time for interpretation.
- Mentally organize what you will say to avoid confusing the interpreter with contradictions, conditional ideas or stumbling over words.
- Encourage interpreter to clarify terms with you. Feel free to ask interpreter to interpret back to you whenever you are concerned about the accuracy and completeness of the interpretation.
- Use feedback to establish that the messages have been understood satisfactorily.
- Speak slowly and with an appropriate tone of voice.
- Remember that the more clearly the interpreter captures the message, the more accurately she/he can then transmit it.
- A good interpretation may require long explanatory phrases, or paraphrasing concepts that do not readily translate into other languages; therefore, you must allow additional time for this purpose.
- Repeat a segment if you sense a problem. Ask the interpreter to repeat back the segment if you detect difficulty. Use related questions or rephrase the sentence to clarify the segment.
- Avoid long, complex sentences, and minimize the use of slang, jargon, or colloquial expressions. Technical terms and professional jargon should be substituted by simple “layman’s” terms.
- When long explanations are needed, divide them up to make sure that the entire message is interpreted.
- Avoid ambiguous questions or statements, abstractions, idiomatic expressions, or metaphors that do not translate easily into the other language.
- Be aware that jokes and humor are often lost in the interpretation.
- Be aware that very few gestures and signs are universally understood.
- If you have a good understanding of the other language, you may be able to follow along and spot any errors in the interpretation. If you are concerned about the quality of the interpretation, speak to the interpreter privately about your concerns at that time.

Don'ts

- Do not ask the interpreter to escort LESP or keep her/him company while waiting to be seen as this makes it difficult for the interpreter to maintain objectivity and neutrality.
- Do not ask the interpreter to explain procedures as they do not have the expertise to do this and it is not part of their role.

¹ LESP is the Limited or Non English Speaker